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The Gazette (Montreal, Quebec, Canada) · Wed, Dec 31, 2014 · Page 27

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TOP PICKS FROM THIS YEAR START WITH FRISELL

JUAN RODRIGUEZ

It surprised me that a hefty proportion of my top recorded jazz picks for 2014 included music that many do not consider jazz, or even rock, for that matter. Consider mild-mannered, poll-winning guitarist Bill Frisell, who finds himself the subject of yet another brouhaha about "purity," the likes of which too often afflict the jazz world. He released the unspeakable — a rock 'n' roll album (ironically titled Guitar in the Space Age, on the Okeh label) reaching back to his 1960s influences, including surfing music, by Duane Eddy, The Chantays, Link Wray and The Beach Boys. Horrors! Critics have lambasted him for nostalgia-mongering. Little wonder, after opening with a sublime seven-minute version of Pipeline, an archetypal surf tune, he follows with a short byrote Byrds version of Turn! Turn! Turn! with its telling line, "To everything there is a season."

Atlantic writer David A. Graham chastised Guitar as "not very adventurous. Perhaps unavoidably for a set so heavily geared to surf tunes, it also feels awfully white. ... The man can have his nostalgia, but please: Make some weird, jarring music sometime soon, too." Actually, Frisell did, early in 2014 with Silent Comedy, an anything-goes blast of scronch recorded in two hours at John Zorn's studio.

"Does it help to know that I was born in 1951," Frisell slyly asked at Jazz at Lincoln Center recently.

"I hope people don't think this is a joke or nostalgia. It first comes from loving this music ..." He doesn't like hierarchies — simple folk to dense classical — "as though one music is higher or lower or more difficult than another. It's all difficult. It's all beautiful. It's all one thing."

Since the mid-1980s, when he was Zorn's house guitarist, Frisell's career has cruised through a huge swath of American genres. His genius is that he extends each style with both humility and adventure yet always sounds like himself. Guitar in the Space Age continues the journey with a light but thoughtful touch, and staying power.

Medeski, Martin & Wood + Nels Cline, Woodstock Sessions Vol. 2 (Universal): We find ourselves awash in a dense, chock-a-block smorgasbord of sound, indefatigably comin' at ya! Starting with Doors of Deception, Medeski's dizzying plunge into keyboard magic, the music is as visceral as quicksand. It's hardly a blur: repeated listenings reveal new sounds lurking around each corner. Cline shows more fevered guitar pyrotechnics than he does in Wilco. MM & W have long transcended "jam band" status, evolving as one of today's grooviest improvising outfits — way out there, yet thoroughly accessible. These are tales from their experimental crypt — by turns thrilling and spooky. Play it loud!

Marc Ribot, featuring Henry Grimes & Chad Taylor, Live at the Village Vanguard (Pi): Ribot, a member of Zorn's regular crew, delivers one of the most pungent live recordings in years from the fabled Greenwich Village club. He doesn't use a lot of effects in a stinging jazz-blues hybrid. Drummer Taylor describes their process, on the album website, as "a ritual that dictates the form and flow of the music. It's a sequence of events that are related to one another not by their changes, form or key, but by the feelings, forces and energy that they share." For bassist Grimes, this was the first time he'd played the Vanguard since 1966, when he was with free-form spirit Albert Ayler (to whom Ribot paid tribute in Spiritual Unity) then disappeared into a netherworld of non-music jobs. His rediscovery in 2003, with his faculties intact and Ribot as an eager taker, is one of the more remarkable events in jazz lore.

John Zorn, Psychomagia (Tzadik): The title evokes something wonderful and scary, spaghetti-western twang combined with quality crunch time and oodles of lilting and slashing dual-guitar notes, intense playing by the Moroccan-Jewish experimental rock quartet Abraxas (led by bassist Shanir Ezra Blumenkranz), of Masada Book Two — The Book of Angels, Vol. 19. Zorn's compositional inspiration came from Giordino Bruno, the medieval Dominican friar, philosopher, mathematician, poet and astronomer, and Chilean avant-garde filmmaker Alejandro Jodorowsky. Add it all up and call 911!

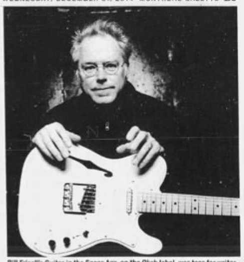
Brad Mehldau & Mark Guiliana, Mehliana, Taming the Dragon (Nonesuch): is a groovalicious psycho-delic sonic masterpiece featuring pianist Mehldau on vintage synths and Fender Rhodes electric piano, and samples (of Amelia Earhart) with occasional acoustic keyboard thrown in for texture. Drummer Guiliana also dabbles in electronic percussion.

The title track kicks things off with Mehldau reciting an ultrahip parable about a car ride that turns into a devilish chase pitting his driver, a cross between Dennis Hopper and Joe Walsh, against some punk who cut him off on Sunset Blvd.: "It's funny sometimes with dreams, you don't realize who's your friend until after you wake up. Then, when you wake up, you get this clarity and you see that maybe all those different people were you in the dream and they're there to lead you to either good or trouble. And the person who's actually acting as you in the dream is kind of like this blind idiot who's just barrelling through the whole dream, like I was, trying to be all tough and s---, telling old Joe to start something with that punk in the sports car ... Yeah, but maybe that crazy dude in the other car was me as well ..."

So the album is a dream of sorts — "The dreams enter through him and he is their vessel" — and Mehldau's control over his electronic instruments is such that they sound human, even contemplative, in this super-fast digital age. And, just maybe, that's the message of this marvellously trippy album.

The Bad Plus, The Rite of Spring (Sony): transcends its novelty — a jazz trio with rock volume tackling the 20th century's most iconic classical piece — by playing Stravinsky's masterpiece straight, no chaser, no falling into the cheesy trap of "jazzing up" the classics. To accomplish that, bassist Reid Anderson told me, "was to really delve into the details of the piece and honour them." Given their rep for tackling iconic pop-rock pieces (Smells Like Teen Spirit, etc.), "it was kind of a no-brainer even though we put up a little bit of a fight because we knew it was going to be so much work." Remarkably it sounds neither belaboured nor pretentious. It's as seriously exciting as the original was back in 1913. A tour de force by The Bad Plus, a band that truly lives up to its name.

rodriguez.music@gmail.com



Bill Frisell's Guitar in the Space Age, on the Okeh label, was tops for writer Juan Rodriguez this year. JIMMY KATZ

TV TIMES TONIGHT - WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 31

MOVIES SPORTS TALK

	B	W	E	V	7 PM	7:30	8 PM	8:30	9 PM	9:30	10 PM	10:30
SRC	112	4	4	2	6:30 Un air de famille	ICI Laflaque (N)	En direct de l'univers (N)			Le Téléjournal	Infoman 2014 (N)	
(3) CBS	282	21	21	53	CBS Evening News	Ent. Tonight	Blue Bloods		Criminal Minds		Stalker	
(5) NBC	280	23	18	52	Jeopardy!	Wheel of Fortune	NBC News Special (N)				New Year's Eve With Carson Daly (N)	
CBC	206	13	13	6	This Hour Has 22 Years		Air Farce New Year's Eve (N)		Ron James: Big Picture (N)		CBC News: The National	
CJOH	229	-	-	10	eTalk	Spun Out	★★★ Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 2 ('11, Adv) Emma Watson, Daniel Radcliffe.					
MATV	-	9	9	9	Montréalité	GROStitres.tv (N)	GROStitres.tv (N)	GROStitres.tv (N)	Les soirées Juste (N)	Les soirées Juste (N)	Selon l'opinion comique	
TVA	115	7	7	4	Oeufs d'or (N)	Juste pour rire (N)			Les beaux Noëls (N)	VLOG (N)	TVA nouvelles	Skatemania 2 (N) (P)
CFCF	205	11	11	7	eTalk	Spun Out	★★★ Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 2 ('11, Adv) Emma Watson, Daniel Radcliffe.					
TQc	138	8	8	3	6:30 ★★★ Nos voisins les hommes ('06)		Nat. Geo. Lionnes sachant chasser		Tamara Drewe ('10, Com) Roger Allam, Gemma Arterton.			
(22) ABC	281	22	22	51	Local 22 News	Inside Edition	Dick Clark's Primetime New Year's Rockin' Eve With Ryan Seacrest (N)				Rock New Year's Eve (N)	
PBS	-	57	6	55	Globe Trekker		Live From Lincoln Center (N)				Michael Feinstein (N)	
V	114	5	5	5	L'arbitre	Rire et délire	★★ Le baiser de minuit ('08, Rom) Cameron Daddo, Faith Ford.				Ménage à trois	
(44) FOX	283	46	36	54	Big Bang Theory	Big Bang Theory	Pitbull's New Year's Revolution				Local 44 News	44 News at 10:30
GLBL	234	3	3	8	Ent. Tonight Canada	Ent. Tonight	★★ Friends With Benefits ('11, Com) Justin Timberlake, Mila Kunis.				ET's New Year's Eve	
(57) PBS	-	24	40	50	PBS NewsHour		Live From Lincoln Center (N)				Michael Feinstein (N)	
CITY	207	14	14	14	Modern Family	Modern Family	Dick Clark's Primetime New Year's Rockin' Eve With Ryan Seacrest (N)				Rock New Year's Eve (N)	
A&E	615	39	-	66	Duck Dynasty	Duck Dynasty	Duck Dynasty		Duck Dynasty		Duck Dynasty	Duck Dynasty
AMC	293	-	-	209	The Walking Dead		The Walking Dead		The Walking Dead		The Walking Dead	
APTN	269	10	58	25	★★ A Prairie Home Companion ('06, Dra) Meryl Streep, Kevin Kline.				★★ Cold Mountain ('03, Rom) Jude Law, Nicole Kidman.			
BRAVO	620	34	-	69	Criminal Minds		Criminal Minds		The Wire		15 The Wire	
CD	129	20	20	36	Enchères: New York	Guerre enchères	Ax Men: Danger en forêt (N)		Guerre enchères	Guerre enchères	Guerre enchères	Guerre enchères
CNN	500	36	27	62	OutFront		All the Best, All the Worst: 2014		New Year's Eve Live with Anderson Cooper and Kathy Griffin			
CV	135	44	35	35	Quatre mariages pour une lune de miel		Qui vient garder? (N)	Me connais-tu? (N)	Sans coupons (N)	Sans coupons (N)	Pimp mon garage	Sauvez meubles
DISC	520	37	37	64	Naked and Afraid		Naked and Afraid		Naked and Afraid		Naked and Afraid	
ENC	304	55	-	216	15 ★★★ Nancy Drew ('07, Fam) Craig Gellis, Emma Roberts.				★★★★ The Big Lebowski ('98, Com) John Goodman, Jeff Bridges.			
FAM	556	-	-	160	6:30 StarNewYear	Liv and Maddie	Phineas and Ferb	Good Luck Charlie	The Next Step	Wingin' It	Good Luck Charlie	Win, Lose or Draw
HGTV	600	29	-	103	Timber Kings German Efficiency		Timber Kings Arkansas Shuffle		Timber Kings The Boss Can Build		Timber Timber Kings: Behind the Saw..	
HIST	522	47	-	74	6:30 M*A*S*H		101 Inventions That Changed the World				101 Fast Foods That Changed the World	
M1	300	-	-	211	Winter's Tale ('14, Fant) Jessica Brown Findlay, Colin Farrell.				The Affair		The Affair	
MM	570	35	-	67	Drunk History	Drunk History	Drunk History	Drunk History	Drunk History	Drunk History	Drunk History	Drunk History
MMAX	142	48	32	32	Musimax illustré	L'index québécois	Les années Gerry Boulet		La danse des étoiles		Génération 90	
MP	141	30	30	30	Buzz		Trop malade!	Tattoo faux	Blackout total	Tattoo faux	Monde de Christo	Mister T imbéciles
NN	502	25	48	18	The Exchange With Amanda Lang		CBC News Now		CBC News: The National		CBC News Now	
OWN	526	-	-	150	Extreme Makeover: Home Edition		ER Vets	ER Vets	★★ Waiting to Exhale ('95, Dra) Angela Bassett, Whitney Houston.			
PEACH	294	-	-	218	Big Bang Theory	Big Bang Theory	Meet the Browns	House of Payne	Meet the Browns	House of Payne	Modern Family	Seinfeld
RDI	126	19	19	19	20 ans de grands reportages		Grands Gilles Latulippe, être comique		Le Téléjournal	20 ans de bloopers	Le Téléjournal	RDI en direct
RDS	123	33	33	33	Hors-jeu 2.0	24CH	IIHF Hockey Championnat mondial junior. Canada c. Etats-Unis.					Sports 30
RS1	418	-	-	177	6:30 Darts Premier League.		Plays of the Year		NHL Countdown	NHL Hockey Edmonton Oilers at Calgary Flames. - Calgary, Alta.		
RSE	406	38	38	81	NHL Hockey Toronto Maple Leafs at Boston Bruins. From TD Garden - Boston, Mass.					NHL Hockey Edmonton Oilers at Calgary Flames. - Calgary, Alta.		
SBK	296	-	-	232	Big Bang Theory	Big Bang Theory	The Three Stooges	The Three Stooges	The Three Stooges	The Three Stooges	The Three Stooges	The Three Stooges
SE	180	-	-	201	5:55 ★★★ Le bon côté des choses ('12)		Arnaque américaine ('13, Crime) Amy Adams, Christian Bale.				20 ★★ La vengeance de Gina ('12)	
SHOW	616	40	-	76	Lost Girl		Arctic Blast ('10, Sci-Fi) Cinthia Burke, Judith Baribeau.				ET Canada New Year's Eve Special	
SLICE	601	-	-	73	Handsome Devils Desert Rat		Handsome Devils The Navy Seal Pastor		Johnny Reid: A Christmas Gift to You		ET Canada New Year's Eve Special (N)	
SPACE	627	32	-	70	★★★★ Crank ('06, Act) Amy Smart, Dwight Yoakam.				★★ The Expendables ('10, Act) Eric Roberts, Jet Li.			
SUNTV	506	-	-	79	The Arena With Michael Coren		The Source With Ezra Levant		Byline With Brian Lilley		The Source With Ezra Levant	
TLC	521	27	39	65	Untold Stories of the E.R.		Strange Sex The Year's Best (N)		Sex Lives: Swingers Supersized Sex		Secret Sex Lives: Unusual Sex	
TLN	700	-	-	250	Being Erica		Magnifica Italia	Magnifica Italia	CSI: Miami		CSI: Miami	
TOONE	554	49	-	71	6:00 ★★★ Dolphin Tale ('11, Fam) Ashley Judd, Morgan Freeman.			Total Drama	Family Guy	American Dad	Archer	★★★ X-Men ('00)
TOONF	139	45	34	34	6:30 Tom et Jerry: L'histoire de Robin ...		American Dad	Faut pas rêver!	Les Simpson	Family Guy	South Park	Faut pas rêver!
TSN5	404	28	28	190	SportsCentre	That's Hockey	NCAA Football Orange Bowl. Mississippi State University vs. Georgia Tech. From Sun Life Stadium - Miami Gardens, Fla.					
TSN2	401	-	-	187	5:00 IIHF Hockey Wo...	Open Gym (N)	IIHF Hockey World Junior Championship. Germany vs. Finland. From Bell Centre - Montreal, Que.					IIHF Hockey World ..
TVAS	193	-	-	23	LNH Hockey Maple Leafs de Toronto c. Bruins de Boston. From TD Garden - Boston, Massachusetts					Le décompte LNH	Le top 50	Le TVA sports
TV5	145	15	15	37	Monument préféré Picardie		Amaluna	55 Le plus grand cabaret du monde sur son 31				
TVO	265	-	-	77	The Aristocrats Blenheim Palace		The Aristocrats Goodwood		The Aristocrats Lord Shaftesbury		The Aristocrats Rothschilds	
VISN	261	-	-	75	Murder, She Wrote		Columbo Pt. 1 of 2 cont'd Jan 1		Call the Midwife		Mr. Selfridge	
WGN	295	-	-	231	Two and a Half Men	Two and a Half Men	iHeartRadio Music Festival Pt. 1 of 2 cont'd Jan 1				WGN News at Nine	
YTV	551	-	-	72	6:00 ★★ Snow Day ('00) Chevy Chase.		Max and Shred	Max and Shred	For Laughs: Gags	For Laughs: Gags	For Laughs: Gags	Life With Boys

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